

February 16, 2012

Washington, DC – Congressman Jim Moran, Ranking Member on the Interior and Environment Appropriations Subcommittee, delivered the following remarks at today hearing with Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, "FY 2013 Budget Request: Department of the Interior."

"Thank you Mr. Chairman.

"Mr. Secretary, I want to join Chairman Simpson in welcoming you to the Subcommittee today. I also appreciate the presence of Deputy Secretary David Hayes and your top notch lead budget person, Pam Haze.

"As I look over your budget request Mr. Secretary, I am struck by the wide-ranging responsibilities carried out by the Department of the Interior. I welcome your efforts to balance these responsibilities as a steward of significant aspects of America's natural and cultural heritage.

"It is with that in mind that I commend you for your recent decision to withdraw more than a million acres of public land within and near the Grand Canyon from further uranium mining claims. That was a stewardship decision that millions of Americans today and future generations to come will appreciate and for which they will owe you a debt of gratitude.

"We are blessed in this country with significant natural beauty and an array of natural resources that our constituents can partake in and enjoy. However, as the respected Republican and former EPA Administrator William Ruckelshaus once noted:

*"Nature provides a free lunch, but only if we control our appetites"*

"It really is a question of balance and your challenge is ensuring that this nation's natural resources not only provide us benefits today but are there for future generations as well. It is with this observation in mind that I note in your testimony Mr. Secretary that you mention that the Interior Department oversees the development of 24 percent of America's domestic oil and gas supplies. To hear some people talk, however, you would think President Obama and you are bent on locking up America's oil and natural gas.

"What these naysayers really don't want the public to know is that under your watch we are today producing more oil and gas off of public lands and waters than was produced in the later years of the previous Bush Administration. Now, no one ever accused former President Bush and Vice-President Cheney, two oil men, of being timid in their development of oil and gas on public lands.

"And I would add that with the industry's record profits, oil and gas companies have profited handsomely from the use of public resources. I support your efforts Mr. Secretary to make these companies contribute to the Department's inspection and administrative costs.

"I also appreciate Mr. Secretary that you and the President recognize that as a finite and depleting resource, oil and gas are not the long-term future for America's energy needs. While some pay lip service to an "all of the above" energy strategy, you and the department have put action to those words. In just the past few years we have seen a tremendous increase in renewable energy produced on public lands, significantly increasing American production in solar and wind energy.

"Mr. Secretary, I may not agree with every decision you make or every item in your budget request but there is a lot to like in your stewardship of the Interior Department. I appreciate the passion and enthusiasm you bring to the job, and I look forward to your testimony this afternoon. Thank you Mr. Chairman."

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